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the Last Dance
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JUST SO YOU KNOW... MY NAME IS MIGUEL O'HARA.
OH, SOME CALL ME "MIGGY"... ONE GUY I CAN'T STAND CALLS ME "MIKE"...
... EVEN A FEW CALL ME "SPIDER-MAN".
YET, AS THE SUB-MARINER EMBARKS ON A WAR AGAINST NEW YORK TO FIGHT FOR THE FREEDOM OF NEW ATLANTIS...
... CARELESS OF THE DAMAGE HE DOES...
... ALL OF A SUDDEN I NOTICE THAT A SEA MONSTER IS VERY, VERY...

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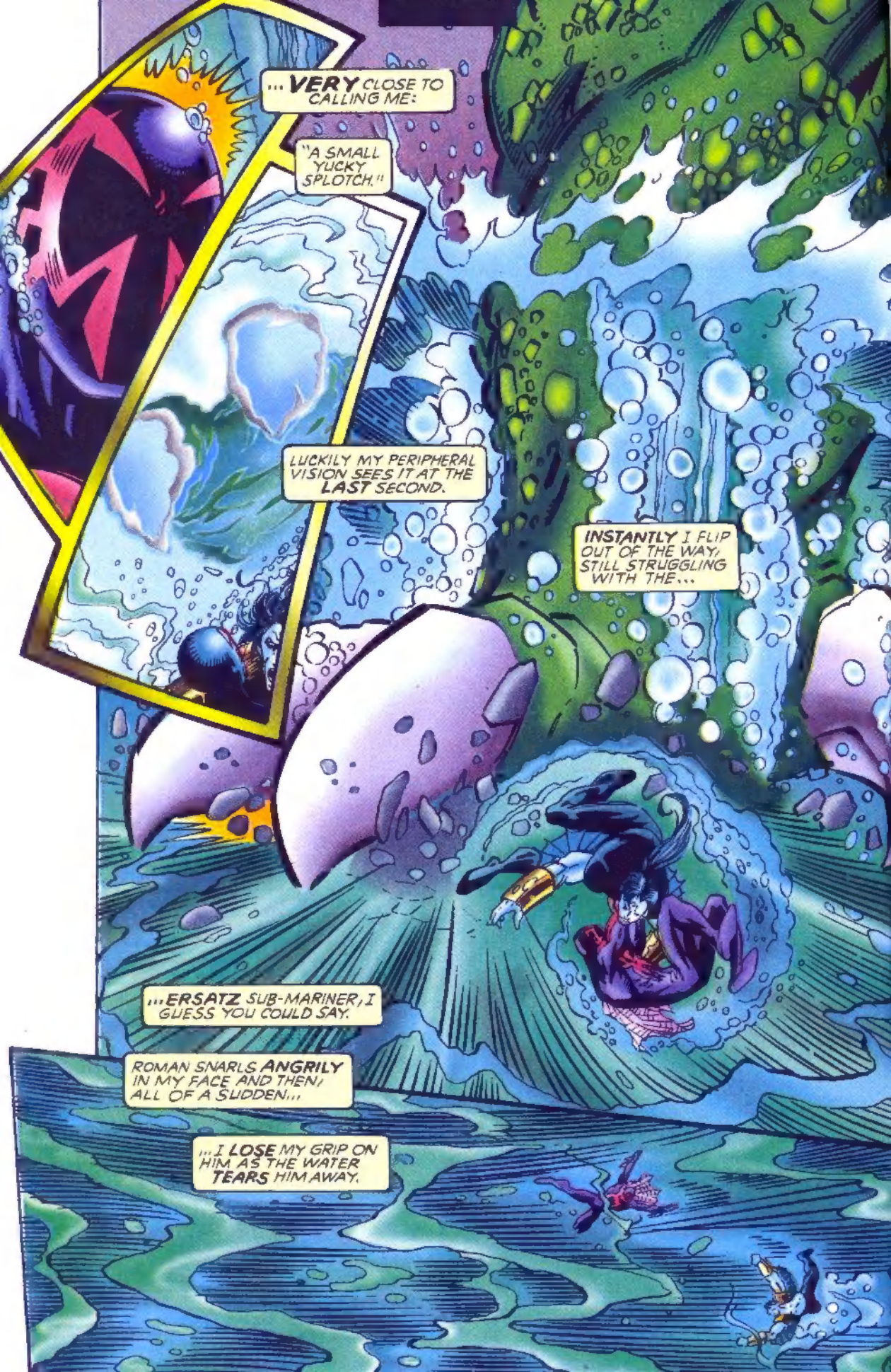
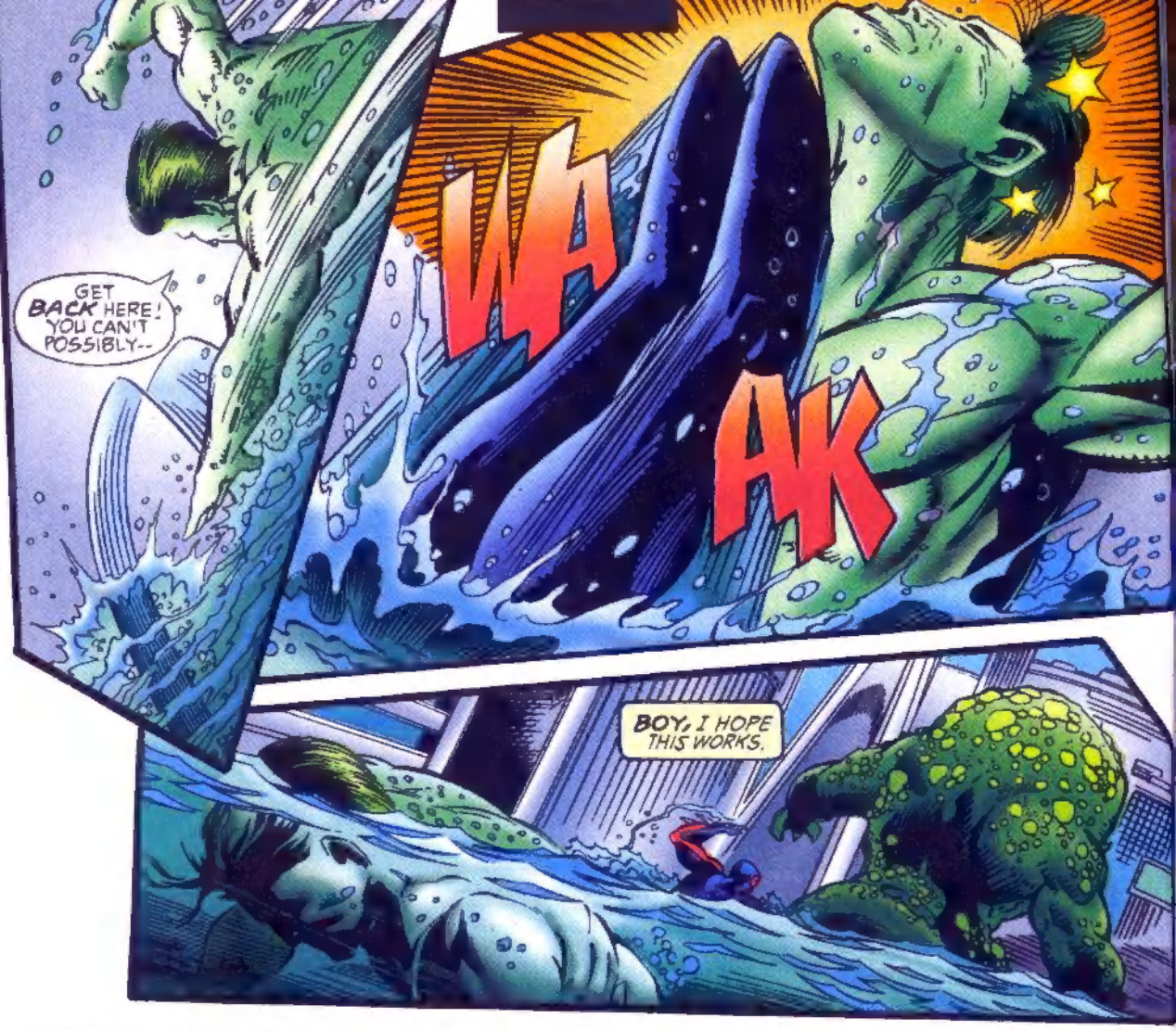
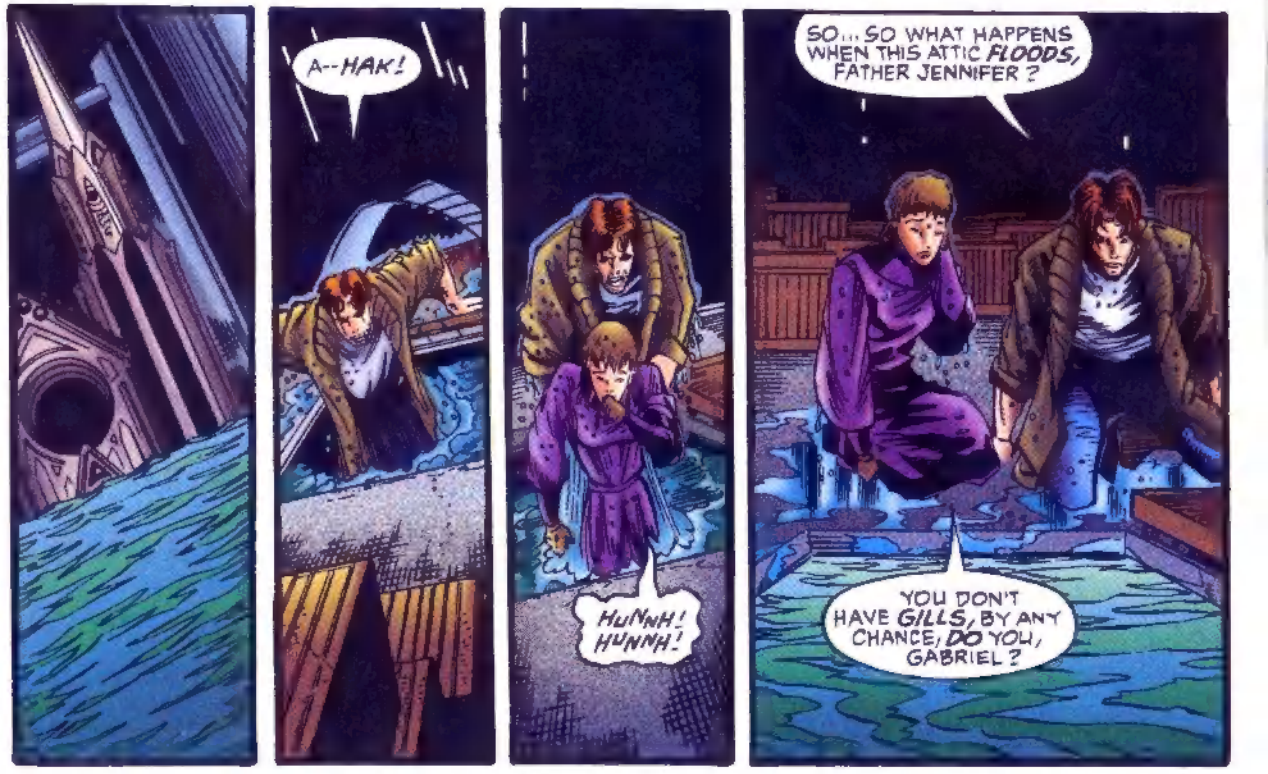

...VERY CLOSE TO CALLING ME:
"A SMALL YUCKY SPLOTCH."
LUCKILY MY PERIPHERAL VISION SEES IT AT THE LAST SECOND.
INSTANTLY I FLIP OUT OF THE WAY, STILL STRUGGLING WITH THE...
...ERSATZ SUB-MARINER, I GUESS YOU COULD SAY.
ROMAN SNARLS ANGRILY IN MY FACE AND THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN...
...I LOSE MY GRIP ON HIM AS THE WATER TEARS HIM AWAY.

DESPERATELY I HEAD FOR THE SURFACE...
...EVERY SECOND THE NEED TO BREATHE BURNING IN MY LUNGS, AND THEN...
...SUDDENLY, I'M SUCKING AIR.
EACH GASP OF AIR TASTES BETTER THAN THE LAST.
ROILING AS THE WATERS ARE, I DON'T NOTICE IT AT FIRST... BUT THEN I DO. IT'S THE HORN ROMAN USED TO CONTROL HIS MONSTER.
VIRTUE REALLY IS ITS OWN REWARD.
EXACTLY AT THE SAME MOMENT, ONE OF THE ATLANTEAN MUTATES SPOTS IT AS WELL.
DOUBTLESSLY HE THINKS I CAN'T POSSIBLY BEAT HIM TO IT.
BOY, OH BOY... IS HE IN FOR A SURPRISE.
Eh? YOU--! YOU...
TWISTED...
...TREACHEROUS...
...EARTH-HUGGING SIMPLETON!
RETURN THAT AT ONCE!


GET BACK HERE! YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY--
WA
AK
BOY, I HOPE THIS WORKS.


A--HAK!
HUNNH! HUNNH!
SO... SO WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THIS ATTIC FLOODS, FATHER JENNIFER?
YOU DON'T HAVE GILLS, BY ANY CHANCE, DO YOU, GABRIEL?

I'LL HAVE TO MOVE FAST. NOT ONLY IS THIS THING DESTROYING DOWNTOWN...
...BUT SOONER OR LATER IT'S GOING TO GET TO THE SUPPORTS THAT KEEP UPTOWN IN PLACE, AND THE WHOLE THING WILL COME CRASHING DOWN AROUND...
SPIDER-MAN!
UH BOY.
FWIZZ
FORTUNATELY HE'S NOT ABLE TO CHANGE THE DIRECTION OF HIS LEAPS. AIRBORNE, I'M MORE MANEUVERABLE.
THAT FACT BOUGHT ME A FEW SECONDS.

THE TRICK IS MAKING EVERY ONE OF THEM COUNT.
NOW... I JUST HAVE TO FIND THE RIGHT NOTE THAT SAYS...
"GO THE SHOCK HOME."
RAWWRR!
WELL, THAT WASN'T IT.

IT... IT SEEMS TO BE HESITATING.
WELL, THAT'S SOMETHING, AT ANY RATE.
THE WAY THINGS WERE GOING, I HALF EXPECTED IT TO START EATING THE ENTIRE CITY.
PUBLIC EYE! QUICKLY! DIVE, DIVE!
DIVE ALL YOU WANT, MUTATE SCUM.
WE'VE GOT ENOUGH DEPTH CHARGES TO FILET THE LOT OF YOU!

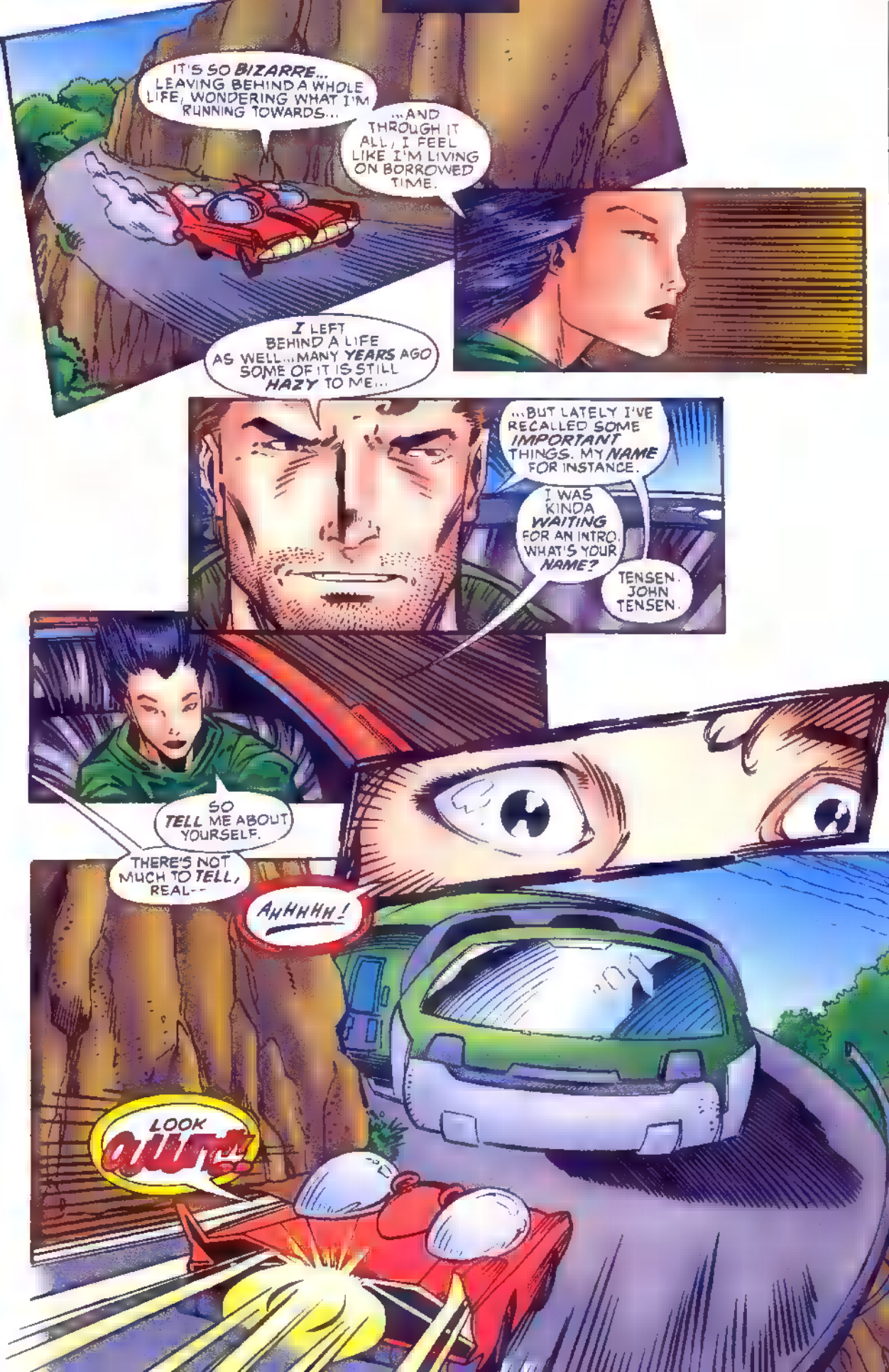
GIVE ME THAT HORN, SURFACE MAN.
WHY, SO YOU CAN DESTROY MORE INNOCENT LIVES!
NONE WILL DIE DURING THIS INCURSION. MY MUTATES WILL SEE TO THAT.
BUT YOU ALL BEAR GUILT! YOU ALL KOWTOW TO THE WHIMS OF ALCHEMAX. YOU'VE SOLD YOUR IMMORTAL SOULS IN EXCHANGE FOR MOMENTARY SAFETY!
AND I AM HERE TO TO LET YOU KNOW... THAT THERE IS NO HAVEN SAFE FROM THE WRATH OF THE SUB-MARINER!

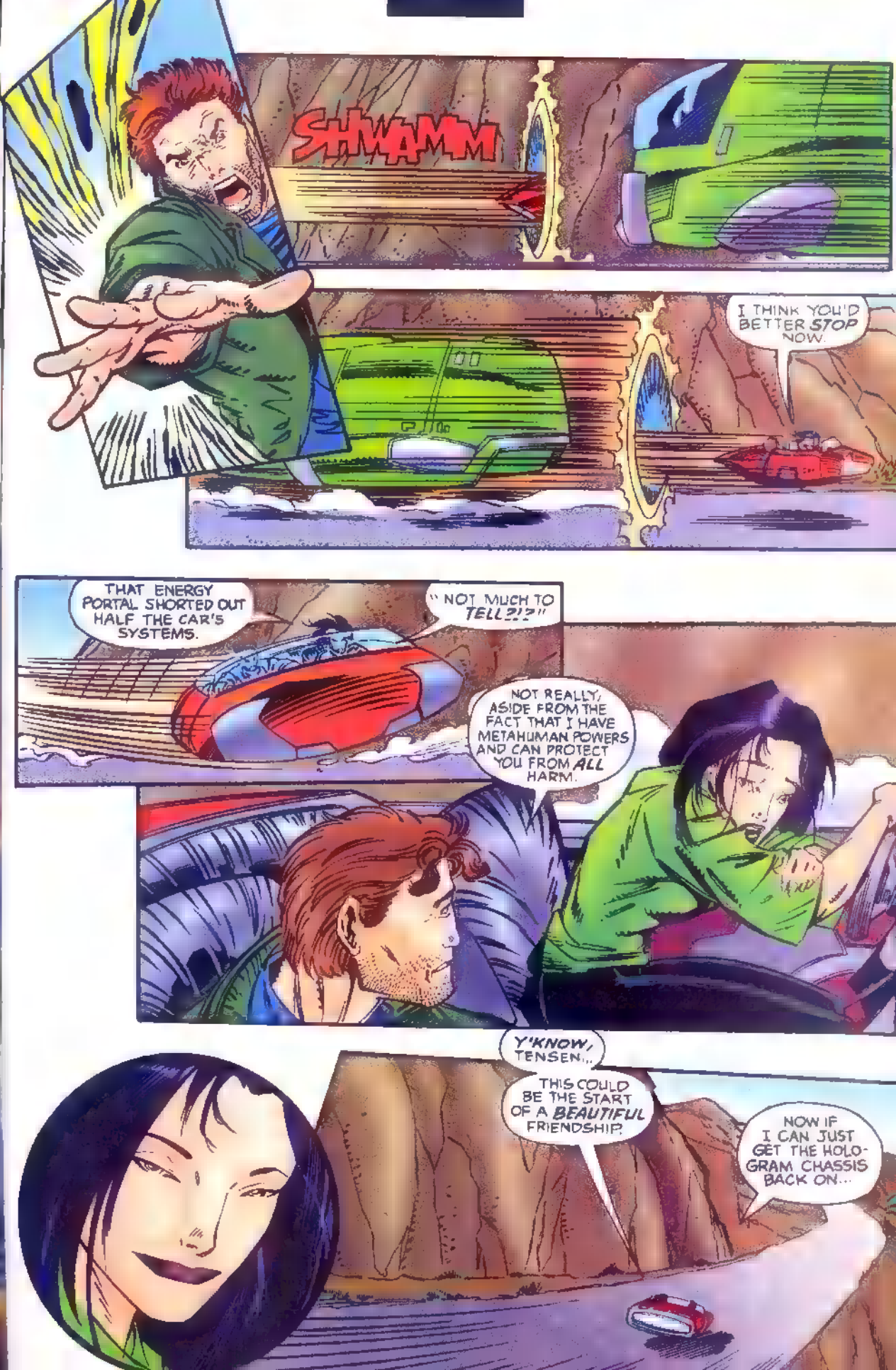
ARRRHHH!
ANIMAL ARE YOU SO DESPERATE THAT YOU'RE REDUCED TO...
...TO BITING LIKE A...
WHAT'S... HAPPENING... GETTING HARD TO THINK...
IT'S THE VENOM IN MY FANGS.
LUCKILY FOR YOU... THE EFFECT IS TEMPORARY...
UNLUCKILY FOR YOU...
...YOU'VE REALLY TEED ME OFF!

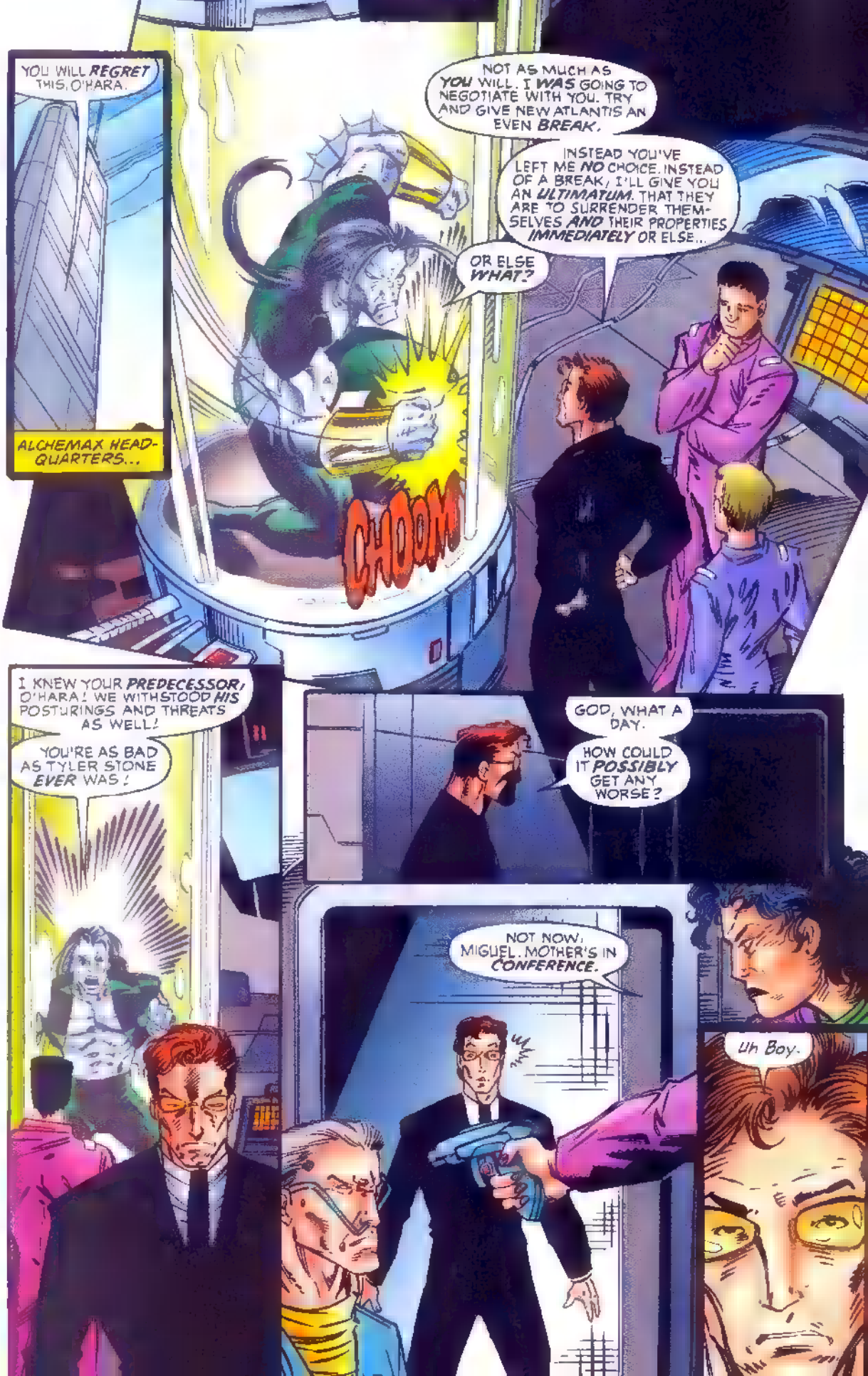
FWIZZ
IT WORKED. WHATEVER IT IS I BLEW ON THE HORN...
...MUST HAVE BEEN THE SIGNAL FOR IT TO GO HOME.
AND IT MUST HAVE HAD SOME SORT OF LOW-LEVEL CONTROL OVER WATER. KEPT ENOUGH DEPTH TO SUPPORT ITS MASS.
BECAUSE AS IT'S GOING, IT'S TAKING THE WATERS WITH IT.
DEAR LORD...
WHAT MUST THE WORLD HAVE BEEN LIKE WHEN THOSE THINGS WANDERED THE EARTH?

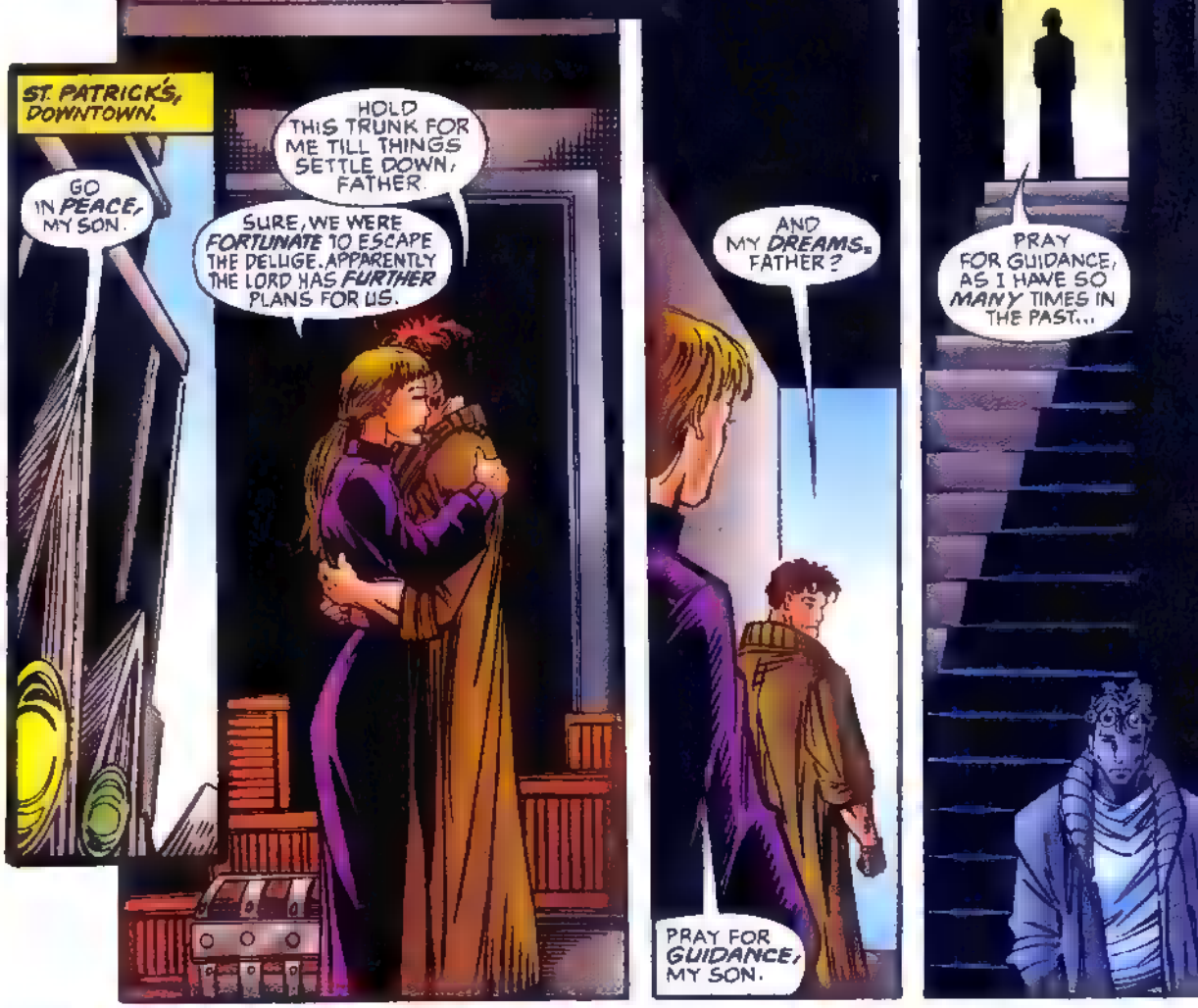
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD, FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN DOWNTOWN! MIGUEL IS DOWN THERE!
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, HE SHOULD NEVER HAVE GONE INTO THE SITUATION WITHOUT PROTECTION...
SHOVE YOUR "DUE RESPECT"! JUST GET HIM BACK HERE IN ONE PIECE!
WELL, WELL, CONCHATA ...STILL MAKING FRIENDS, AS ALWAYS.
TYLER! WHAT THE SHOCK ARE YOU DOING HERE? MIGUEL THREW YOU OUT!
I'M AWARE OF WHAT HE...
HE...
AND THEN, UNBIDDEN... HIS THOUGHTS ROLL BACK... BACK TO THE MOMENT OF HIS SHOOTING... BACK TO THE FORM CLOAKED IN SHADOW...

AND THE SHADOWS... FALL AWAY...
OF COUUUURSE...
CONCHATA, MY DEAR, FORGIVE ME.
I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU JUST NOW... WITHOUT YOUR GUN.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
OH, COME NOW, DON'T BE COY. SURELY YOU WANT TO SHOUT OUT, "I NEARLY KILLED TYLER STONE!"
AND BEST OF ALL, I DON'T HAVE TO ASK MELO-DRAMATIC QUESTIONS SUCH AS, "WHY?"
YOU TORMENTED MIGUEL, AND YOU WOULD'VE DESTROYED DANA, TOO...
YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE ME... BUT I LOVED THAT GIRL. I TRULY DID.
I'M GOING TO MIGUEL'S INNER OFFICE NOW. BY THE TIME I COME OUT, I WANT YOU GONE.
CONCHATA...
HE KNOWS I'M HIS FATHER.


IT'S SO BIZARRE... LEAVING BEHIND A WHOLE LIFE, WONDERING WHAT I'M RUNNING TOWARDS...
...AND THROUGH IT ALL, I FEEL LIKE I'M LIVING ON BORROWED TIME.
I LEFT BEHIND A LIFE AS WELL...MANY YEARS AGO SOME OF IT IS STILL HAZY TO ME...
...BUT LATELY I'VE RECALLED SOME IMPORTANT THINGS. MY NAME FOR INSTANCE.
I WAS KINDA WAITING FOR AN INTRO. WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
TENSEN. JOHN TENSEN.
SO TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.
THERE'S NOT MUCH TO TELL, REAL--
AHHHHH!
LOOK OUT!


SHWAMM
I THINK YOU'D BETTER STOP NOW.
THAT ENERGY PORTAL SHORTED OUT HALF THE CAR'S SYSTEMS.
"NOT MUCH TO TELL?!?"
NOT REALLY, ASIDE FROM THE FACT THAT I HAVE METAHUMAN POWERS AND CAN PROTECT YOU FROM ALL HARM.
Y'KNOW, TENSEN...
THIS COULD BE THE START OF A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP.
NOW IF I CAN JUST GET THE HOLO-GRAM CHASSIS BACK ON...


YOU WILL REGRET THIS, O'HARA.
ALCHEMAX HEADQUARTERS...
NOT AS MUCH AS YOU WILL. I WAS GOING TO NEGOTIATE WITH YOU. TRY AND GIVE NEW ATLANTIS AN EVEN BREAK.
INSTEAD YOU'VE LEFT ME NO CHOICE. INSTEAD OF A BREAK, I'LL GIVE YOU AN ULTIMATUM. THAT THEY ARE TO SURRENDER THEMSELVES AND THEIR PROPERTIES IMMEDIATELY OR ELSE...
OR ELSE WHAT?
CHOOM
I KNEW YOUR PREDECESSOR, O'HARA! WE WITHSTOOD HIS POSTURINGS AND THREATS AS WELL!
YOU'RE AS BAD AS TYLER STONE EVER WAS!
GOD, WHAT A DAY.
HOW COULD IT POSSIBLY GET ANY WORSE?
NOT NOW, MIGUEL. MOTHER'S IN CONFERENCE.
Uh Boy.


ST. PATRICK'S, DOWNTOWN.
GO IN PEACE, MY SON.
HOLD THIS TRUNK FOR ME TILL THINGS SETTLE DOWN, FATHER.
SURE, WE WERE FORTUNATE TO ESCAPE THE DELUGE. APPARENTLY THE LORD HAS FURTHER PLANS FOR US.
AND MY DREAMS, FATHER?
PRAY FOR GUIDANCE, MY SON.
PRAY FOR GUIDANCE, AS I HAVE SO MANY TIMES IN THE PAST...

AND BE AWARE THAT THE SUGGESTIONS YOU RECEIVE...
...MAY NOT ALWAYS BE WHAT YOU EXPECTED.

THAT ENCLOSURE IS REALLY TAKING A POUNDING! ARE YOU SURE IT'LL HOLD UP?
LET'S PLAY IT SAFE AND GAS-TRANQ HIM.
I CAME TO TRY AND REASON WITH YOU, MIKE. TO GIVE YOU ONE LAST CHANCE TO TURN THE REINS BACK TO ME.
IF YOU DO NOT... THEN FOR STARTERS...
... I SHALL INFORM THE AUTHORITIES OF YOUR MOTHER'S MURDER ATTEMPT.
ALCHEMAX IS THE AUTHORITY, TYLER. YOU'VE SEEN TO THAT.
BESIDES, TYLER, YOU'RE SLIME. I KNOW WHERE THE BODIES ARE BURIED, AND I KNOW WHAT YOU DID TO YOUR DEAR DEPARTED WIFE.
JUST WALK AWAY MIGUEL, AND LET ME END THIS.
YES, BY ALL MEANS, MIKE, WALK AWAY.
AND PUT THE LIE TO YOUR MORAL POSTURING ONCE AND FOR ALL.

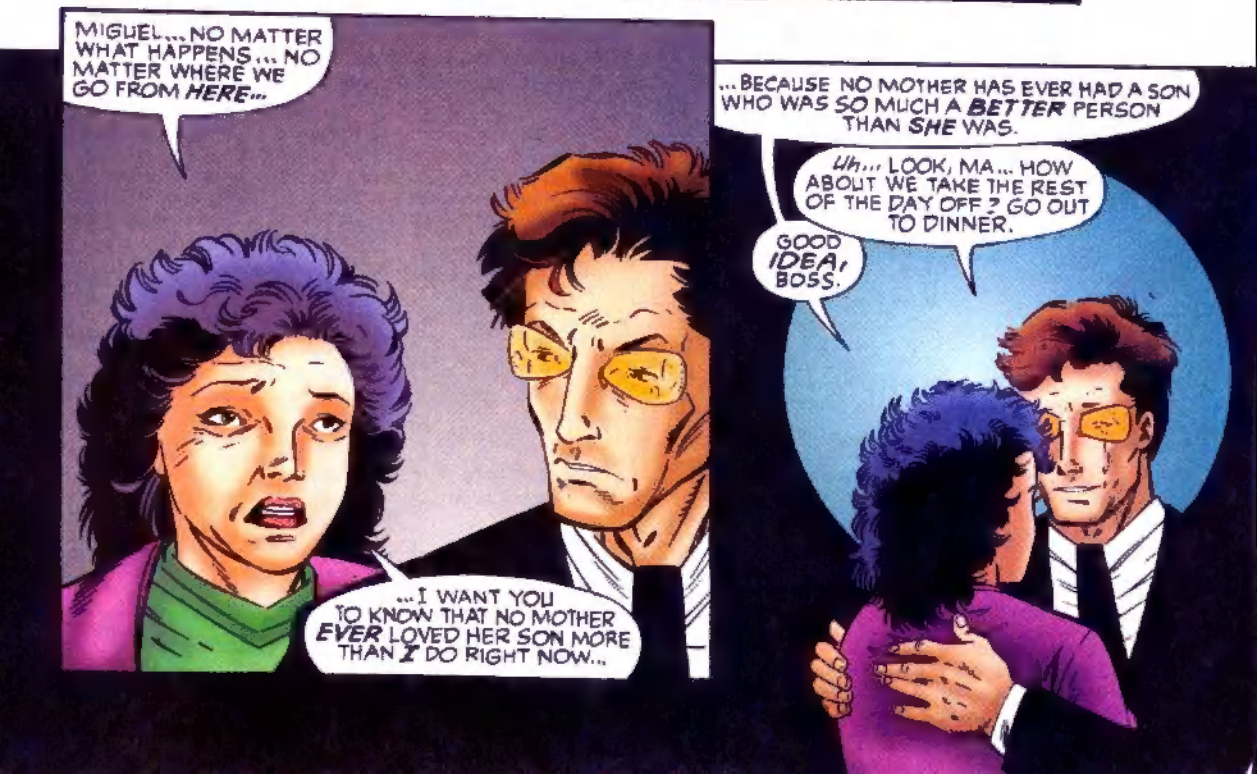
MA... CALL DOWN TO THE LAB.
TELL THEM I WANT THE SUB-MARINER RELEASED IMMEDIATELY AND ESCORTED BACK TO THE OCEAN. I WANT IT DONE NOW.
BUT... BUT WHAT ABOUT...
NOW, MA. BEFORE THIS DAY GETS EVEN MORE OUT OF CONTROL.
CRASH!
FOOLS! YOU THOUGHT TO IMPRISON THE ONE TRUE, SEA-BORN SUB-MARINER!

SERGEANT? WHAT'S WITH THE ALARMS?
THE SUB-MARINER, SIR! HE BROKE OUT OF THE LAB!
WE PINNED HIM IN A CROSSFIRE DOWN NEAR LAB 27, BUT...
LAB 27! THAT'S WHERE WE STORE THE VENOM SYMBI--
BCHOOM
RUE THIS DAY, ALCHEMAX! DREAD THE FUTURE, O'HARA!
WE RETURN TO OUR OCEAN HOME! BUT SOMEDAY, WE SHALL FINISH WHAT WE HAVE BEGUN!
ENJOY THE REST OF 2099, O'HARA, FOR YOU WILL NOT SEE 2100.

TERRIFIC.
GOOD-BYE, TYLER.
I'LL SEE YOU IN HELL.
FWIZZ
BLAM
W-WHAT WAS THAT? WHAT WAS THAT?!
A WEBLINE, MY DEAR, NOT EXACTLY UNUSUAL... FOR SPIDER-MAN. IS IT, SON?
I'VE KNOWN SINCE THE VERY BEGINNING, MIKE. KEPT IT TO MYSELF.
BUT NOW IT'S TIME FOR ALL THE CARDS ON THE TABLE. TIME TO KNOW... WHERE WE ALL STAND.
YES. TIME TO KNOW.
BLAM BLAM BLAM

WELL, WELL. THAT WAS VERY INTERESTING.
YOU'RE AS RUTHLESS AS I COULD HAVE HOPED.
WELL DONE... SON.
THAT... THAT CREEP! IT WAS ALL A GAME TO HIM! HE WAS NEVER EVEN HERE!
IT WAS A SOPHISTICATED HOLOVID!
HE DIDN'T THROW ANY SHADOWS. THAT WAS THE TIP-OFF.


SO... SO YOU REALIZED BEFORE YOU SHOT AT HIM?
MIGUEL? DID YOU?
I HOPE SO.


MIGUEL... NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS... NO MATTER WHERE WE GO FROM HERE...
...I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT NO MOTHER EVER LOVED HER SON MORE THAN I DO RIGHT NOW...
...BECAUSE NO MOTHER HAS EVER HAD A SON WHO WAS SO MUCH A BETTER PERSON THAN SHE WAS.
Uh... LOOK, MA... HOW ABOUT WE TAKE THE REST OF THE DAY OFF? GO OUT TO DINNER.
GOOD IDEA, BOSS.

WE ARGUE ABOUT WHERE WE'RE GOING TO EAT... AND IT'S THE FIRST ARGUMENT WE'VE EVER HAD THAT'S FUN.
I'M LEFT WONDERING IF SHE REALLY DID KNOW ALL ALONG, AS TYLER DID.
I'M LEFT WONDERING ABOUT GABRIEL... AND SUB-MARINER. AND VENOM... AND GOBLIN... AND AND EVERYTHING ABOUT THE FUTURE.
AND YET, SOMEHOW...I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL...
...THAT IF I WAS ABLE TO REACH SOME DEGREE OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE CRAZY LADY...
...THEN, SOONER OR LATER, EVERYTHING ELSE IS BOUND TO FALL INTO PLACE.
AND MAYBE THE CURSE OF SPIDER-MAN... WAS MORE OF A BLESSING THAN I'D EVER BEEN PREPARED TO ADMIT.
NAH. THAT'S PUSHING IT.